

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 278

BY SENATORS JEFFRIES, BEACH, BOSO, CLINE, GAUNCH;

OJEDA, ROMANO, SMITH, STOLLINGS, TAKUBO, WELD,

WOELFEL, PLYMALE, MARONEY AND BLAIR

[Introduced February 13, 2017; Referred
to the Committee on Natural Resources; and then to
the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL amend and reenact §20-2-5 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
 2 Sunday hunting laws; removing certain restrictions on hunting; eliminating the need for
 3 ballot measures pertaining to Sunday hunting; voiding the results of any ballot measure
 4 prohibiting Sunday hunting; and permitting Sunday hunting on private property throughout
 5 the state with written consent of the landowner.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That §20-2-5 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended and reenacted
 2 to read as follows:

ARTICLE 2. WILDLIFE RESOURCES.

**§20-2-5. Unlawful methods of hunting and fishing and other unlawful acts; authorizing
Sunday hunting on private property.**

1 (a) Except as authorized by the director or by law, it is unlawful at any time for any person
 2 to:

3 (1) Shoot at any wild bird or wild animal unless it is plainly visible;

4 (2) Dig out, cut out, smoke out, or in any manner take or attempt to take any live wild
 5 animal or wild bird out of its den or place of refuge;

6 (3) Use or attempt to use any artificial light or any night vision technology, including image
 7 intensification, thermal imaging or active illumination while hunting, locating, attracting, taking,
 8 trapping or killing any wild bird or wild animal: *Provided*, That it is lawful to hunt or take coyote,
 9 fox, raccoon, opossum or skunk by the use of artificial light or night vision technology. Any person
 10 violating this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall for each
 11 offense be fined not less than \$100 nor more than \$500, and shall be confined in jail for not less
 12 than ten days nor more than one hundred days;

13 (4) Hunt, take, kill, wound or shoot at wild animals or wild birds from an airplane or other
 14 airborne conveyance, a drone or other unmanned aircraft, an automobile or other land
 15 conveyance, or from a motor-driven water conveyance;

16 (5) Use a drone or other unmanned aircraft to hunt, take or kill a wild bird or wild animal,
17 or to use a drone or other unmanned aircraft to drive or herd any wild bird or wild animal for the
18 purposes of hunting, trapping or killing;

19 (6) Take any beaver or muskrat by any means other than a trap;

20 (7) Catch, capture, take, hunt or kill by seine, net, bait, trap or snare or like device a bear,
21 wild turkey, ruffed grouse, pheasant or quail;

22 (8) Intentionally destroy or attempt to destroy the nest or eggs of any wild bird or have in
23 his or her possession the nest or eggs;

24 (9) Carry an uncased or loaded firearm in the woods of this state with the following
25 permissible exceptions:

26 (A) A person in possession of a valid license or permit during open firearms hunting
27 season for wild animals and nonmigratory wild birds;

28 (B) A person hunting or taking unprotected species of wild animals, wild birds and
29 migratory wild birds during the open season, in the open fields, open water and open marshes of
30 the state;

31 (C) A person carrying a firearm pursuant to sections six and six-a of this article; or

32 (D) A person carrying a firearm for self defense who is not prohibited from possessing
33 firearms by section seven, article seven, chapter sixty-one of this code;

34 (10) Have in his or her possession a crossbow with a nocked bolt, or a rifle or shotgun
35 with cartridges that have not been removed or a magazine that has not been detached, in or on
36 any vehicle or conveyance, or its attachments. For the purposes of this section, a rifle or shotgun
37 whose magazine readily detaches is considered unloaded if the magazine is detached and no
38 cartridges remain in the rifle or shotgun itself. Except that between five o'clock post meridian of
39 day one and seven o'clock ante meridian, Eastern Standard Time, of the following day, any
40 unloaded firearm or crossbow may be carried only when in a case or taken apart and securely
41 wrapped. During the period from July 1 to September 30, inclusive, of each year, the requirements

42 relative to carrying unloaded firearms are permissible only from eight-thirty o'clock post meridian
43 to five o'clock ante meridian, Eastern Standard Time: *Provided*, That the time periods for carrying
44 unloaded and uncased firearms are extended for one hour after the post meridian times and one
45 hour before the ante meridian times established in this subdivision, if a person is transporting or
46 transferring the firearms to or from a hunting site, campsite, home or other abode;

47 (11) Hunt, catch, take, kill, trap, injure or pursue with firearms or other implement by which
48 wildlife may be taken after the hour of five o'clock ante meridian on Sunday on private land without
49 the written consent of the landowner any wild animals or wild birds except when a big game
50 season opens on a Monday, the Sunday prior to that opening day will be closed for any taking of
51 wild animals or birds after five o'clock ante meridian on that Sunday: *Provided*, That traps
52 previously and legally set may be tended after the hour of five o'clock ante meridian on Sunday
53 and the person tending the traps may carry firearms for the purpose of humanely dispatching
54 trapped animals. Any person violating this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon
55 conviction thereof, in addition to any fines that may be imposed by this or other sections of this
56 code, is subject to a \$100 fine;

57 (12) Hunt, catch, take, kill, injure or pursue a wild animal or wild bird with the use of a
58 ferret;

59 (13) Buy raw furs, pelts or skins of fur-bearing animals unless licensed to do so;

60 (14) Catch, take, kill or attempt to catch, take or kill any fish by any means other than by
61 rod, line and hooks with natural or artificial lures: *Provided*, That snaring of any species of suckers,
62 carp, fallfish and creek chubs is lawful;

63 (15) Employ, hire, induce or persuade, with money, things of value or by any means, any
64 person to hunt, take, catch or kill any wild animal or wild bird except those species in which there
65 is no closed season; or to fish for, catch, take or kill any fish, amphibian or aquatic life that is
66 protected by rule, or the sale of which is otherwise prohibited;

67 (16) Hunt, catch, take, kill, capture, pursue, transport, possess or use any migratory game

68 or nongame birds except as permitted by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U. S. C. §703, *et seq.*,
69 and its regulations;

70 (17) Kill, take, catch, sell, transport or have in his or her possession, living or dead, any
71 wild bird other than a game bird including the plumage, skin or body of any protected bird,
72 irrespective of whether the bird was captured in or out of this state, except the English or European
73 sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), which may
74 be killed at any time;

75 (18) Use dynamite, explosives or any poison in any waters of the state for the purpose of
76 killing or taking fish. Any person violating this subdivision is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction
77 thereof, shall be fined not more than \$500 or imprisoned for not less than six months nor more
78 than three years, or both fined and imprisoned;

79 (19) Have a bow and gun, or have a gun and any arrow, in the fields or woods at the same
80 time;

81 (20) Have a crossbow in the woods or fields, or use a crossbow to hunt for, take or attempt
82 to take any wildlife except as otherwise provided in sections five-g and forty-two-w of this article;

83 (21) Take or attempt to take turkey, bear, elk or deer with any arrow unless the arrow is
84 equipped with a point having at least two sharp cutting edges measuring in excess of three fourths
85 of an inch wide;

86 (22) Take or attempt to take any wildlife with an arrow having an explosive head or shaft,
87 a poisoned arrow or an arrow which would affect wildlife by any chemical action;

88 (23) Shoot an arrow across any public highway;

89 (24) Permit any dog owned or under his or her control to chase, pursue or follow the tracks
90 of any wild animal or wild bird, day or night, between May 1 and August 15: *Provided*, That dogs
91 may be trained on wild animals and wild birds, except deer and wild turkeys, and field trials may
92 be held or conducted on the grounds or lands of the owner, or by his or her bona fide tenant, or
93 upon the grounds or lands of another person with his or her written permission, or on public lands

94 at any time. Nonresidents may not train dogs in this state at any time except during the legal small
95 game hunting season. A person training dogs may not have firearms or other implements in his
96 or her possession during the closed season on wild animals and wild birds;

97 (25) Conduct or participate in a trial, including a field trial, shoot-to-retrieve field trial, water
98 race or wild hunt: *Provided*, That any person, group of persons, club or organization may hold a
99 trial upon obtaining a permit pursuant to section fifty-six of this article. The person responsible for
100 obtaining the permit shall prepare and keep an accurate record of the names and addresses of
101 all persons participating in the trial and make the records readily available for inspection by any
102 natural resources police officer upon request;

103 (26) Hunt, catch, take, kill or attempt to hunt, catch, take or kill any wild animal, wild bird
104 or wild fowl except during open seasons;

105 (27) Hunting on public lands on Sunday after five o'clock ante meridian is prohibited; and

106 ~~(28) Hunt, catch, take, kill, trap, injure or pursue with firearms or other implement which~~
107 ~~wildlife can be taken, on private lands on Sunday after the hour of five o'clock ante meridian:~~
108 ~~*Provided*, That the provisions of this subdivision do not apply in any county until the county~~
109 ~~commission of the county holds an election on the question of whether the provisions of this~~
110 ~~subdivision prohibiting hunting on Sunday shall apply within the county and the voters approve~~
111 ~~the allowance of hunting on Sunday in the county. The election is determined by a vote of the~~
112 ~~resident voters of the county in which the hunting on Sunday is proposed to be authorized. The~~
113 ~~county commission of the county in which Sunday hunting is proposed shall give notice to the~~
114 ~~public of the election by publication of the notice as a Class II-0 legal advertisement in compliance~~
115 ~~with the provisions of article three, chapter fifty-nine of this code and the publication area for the~~
116 ~~publication is the county in which the election is to be held. The date of the last publication of the~~
117 ~~notice shall fall on a date within the period of the fourteen consecutive days next preceding the~~
118 ~~election.~~

119 ~~On the local option election ballot shall be printed the following:~~

120 ~~Shall hunting on Sunday be authorized on private lands only with the consent of the land~~
121 ~~owner in _____ County?~~

122 ~~Yes~~

123 ~~No~~

124 ~~(Place a cross mark in the square opposite your choice.)~~

125 ~~Any local option election to approve or disapprove of the proposed authorization of Sunday~~
126 ~~hunting within a county shall be in accordance with procedures adopted by the commission. The~~
127 ~~local option election may be held in conjunction with a primary or general election or at a special~~
128 ~~election. Approval shall be by a majority of the voters casting votes on the question of approval~~
129 ~~or disapproval of Sunday hunting at the election.~~

130 ~~If a majority votes against allowing Sunday hunting, an election on the issue may not be~~
131 ~~held for a period of one hundred four weeks. If a majority votes "yes", an election reconsidering~~
132 ~~the action may not be held for a period of five years. A local option election may thereafter be~~
133 ~~held if a written petition of qualified voters residing within the county equal to at least five percent~~
134 ~~of the number of persons who were registered to vote in the next preceding general election is~~
135 ~~received by the county commission of the county in which Sunday hunting is authorized. The~~
136 ~~petition may be in any number of counterparts. The election shall take place at the next primary~~
137 ~~or general election scheduled more than ninety days following receipt by the county commission~~
138 ~~of the petition required by this subsection: *Provided*, That the issue may not be placed on the~~
139 ~~ballot until all statutory notice requirements have been met. No local law or regulation providing~~
140 ~~any penalty, disability, restriction, regulation or prohibition of Sunday hunting may be enacted and~~
141 ~~the provisions of this article preempt all regulations, rules, ordinances and laws of any county or~~
142 ~~municipality in conflict with this subdivision.~~

143 ~~Amendments to this subdivision promulgated during the 2015 regular session of the~~
144 ~~Legislature shall have no effect upon the results of elections held prior to their enactment; and~~

145 ~~(29) (28) Hunt or conduct hunts for a fee when the person is not physically present in the~~

146 same location as the wildlife being hunted within West Virginia.

147 (b) Notwithstanding any ballot measure relating to Sunday hunting that has passed or
148 failed prior to the effective date of the amendments to this section promulgated during the 2017
149 regular session of the Legislature, it is lawful to hunt throughout the State of West Virginia on
150 private lands on Sundays after the hour of five o'clock ante meridian with the written consent of
151 the private landowner.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to permit hunting on Sundays on private land with the consent of the landowner. The bill also eliminates ballot measures pertaining to Sunday hunting and voids the results of any ballot measure prohibiting Sunday hunting.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.